

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A wealth of historical tradition together with a great deal of remaining physical evidence of a long and exciting history form a strong base for civic pride in Winchester. For Winchester, the events of the past offer a challenge to today's citizens to meet the tests of the future with a determination to preserve and enhance those assets which experience has proved to be valuable.

This update to the Comprehensive Plan recognizes the relationship of the City of Winchester and the County of Frederick. The political separation of the two entities only increases the requirement for coordination between the two governments to ensure that the best use is made of all of the collective resources for the desirable development of the region.

The Comprehensive Plan is a means by which both assets and liabilities may be inventoried and evaluated and a general course of action outlined for the future, a course which will assist in accomplishing the goals of the City. These goals are related to improving the lives of present and future citizens by providing an urban environment conducive to a full and productive life. While the Comprehensive Plan is concerned primarily with the physical elements of the City, the way in which land is used and the public facilities, streets, utilities, and services which are necessary for an appropriate arrangement of land uses, the social, cultural, and economic well being of the citizens of the City and its region are necessarily taken into account.

The Comprehensive Plan is not necessarily a document designed to change the course of history, to make Winchester a city greatly different in the future from what it is today. The limited ability of the plan to foresee the future should be accepted. The plan is nevertheless intended as a useful advisory document and it has the capacity to assist with the avoidance of future mistakes which can indeed change the character of Winchester, change it to something that is less efficient, more costly, less attractive, or less liveable than it is today.

PLANNING HISTORY

This comprehensive plan update is the fourth major planning document for Winchester. The first plan (not including the original layout of the city in 1752) was prepared by Garland A. Wood and Associates and was adopted by the Common Council in September 1958. At this time Winchester was only partly subject to a zoning ordinance and I-81 had not been built, although its location was planned.

The second comprehensive plan, Comprehensive Plan 1990, was adopted in November 1974. This plan was prepared by the Division of State Planning and Community Affairs. This plan was an unusually detailed document covering all aspects of city development and containing detailed

analyses of physical conditions, land use, transportation, and community facilities.

The third comprehensive plan document, The Comprehensive Plan 1982, was adopted in that year and was prepared by Harland, Bartholomew, and Associates of Richmond. This plan was not intended to replace the 1974 plan completely. While, the 1982 plan covered all major elements of the 1974 plan and could be used independently, it was much less detailed and was considered as a supplement to the earlier plan, taking into account changed conditions and new approaches to old problems. Except as footnoted, much of the material of the 1982 plan came directly from the 1974 plan.

Similarly, this fourth comprehensive plan echoes the 1982 and 1974 efforts. Because final 1990 Census data has not been fully released, new general statistical data is not available and much of the data that is available is extrapolated from the 1980 Census or based upon preliminary 1990 Census data. This Plan is, moreover, a reexamination of the conclusions of the previous plans to determine whether any mid-course corrections should be made. While this iteration is based on limited new data, as most changes in statistical trends only become clear with each census, it does reflect the concerns resulting from the increasing impact of development pressures from the Washington metropolitan area. The next comprehensive plan update, scheduled for completion in 1994, should document the impact of these pressures from 1990 Census and should reconsider, at the most basic level, the quantity and quality questions of growth and development.

The importance of this next effort cannot be overstated. The Winchester area could change as much in the next 20 years as it has in the last 200. Becoming part of the Washington metropolitan area radically changed Fairfax County, is now affecting Loudoun County, and undoubtedly will significantly alter the Winchester/Frederick area. Not only will new census data redefine the choices facing Winchester, an updated area-wide transportation plan, which should be completed in conjunction with the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, will redefine the shape of the community. Every effort should be made to ensure that this next iteration is given the attention and consideration, not to mention the resources and manpower, necessary to develop policy direction and achievable objectives crucial for Winchester's future. It is these policies and objectives that can ensure that adequate community services are available as well as provide those quality of life improvements that will make Winchester a preferred place to live and do business. The ground work toward this next effort should begin as soon as this mid-course update is completed.

PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

Considerable progress has been made toward achieving the goals contained in the 1982 Plan. Among the major accomplishments are the restructuring of the residential districts whereby two districts were eliminated and the remaining ones were adjusted to reflect the density policies established in the 1974 Plan. More recently, the

Residential-Business District (RB-1) was created near the downtown as called for in the 1982 Plan to encourage the development of a mixed use district which preserves the residential scale of the area. A formal Capital Improvement Program has been instituted and the City has revived the Housing Program through the Community Development Block Grant Program for residential improvements in selected neighborhoods.

Numerous capital projects called for in the Comprehensive Plan have been constructed. Many of the larger projects have been developed on a regional basis reflecting the cooperation between jurisdictions. This includes the Opequon Water Reclamation Facility (sanitary sewage treatment plant), the Winchester Regional Airport (new terminal, hangers, and runway extension), and the Clarke-Frederick-Winchester Regional Adult Detention Facility (Jail) and Work Release Center. The Solid Waste Landfill in Frederick County has also been expanded recently.

Several changes have occurred which were not envisioned in the last plan update. Largest among these was the establishment of the Medical Center District and the 1990 relocation of the Winchester Medical Center to the west end of the City. This move in turn created needs which were addressed through establishment of the Health Services District at the Stewart Street site and the enactment of regulations to accommodate reuse of the existing infrastructure. The construction of the new Frederick Douglass Elementary School in the south part of the City and the construction of a new municipal parking garage at the north end of the downtown are examples of two other actions not anticipated in the 1982 Plan.

A number of issues identified in the 1982 Plan remain unresolved or incomplete. Key among these are the numerous transportation improvements that are long overdue. Other issues relate to the development of a city-wide system of open spaces and recreational opportunities including features such as bikepaths and streambelt parks. Also, use of the Planned Development approach, with one notable exception, has not been widely employed.

Format

This plan document follows the general format of the 1982 Plan with the exception of the Future Land Use Plan chapter being shifted from its placement before the Transportation, Downtown, Housing, and Community Facilities chapters to a position immediately following these chapters. This change more appropriately presents the discussion of future land uses after analysis of these interrelated topics. The Implementation chapter has been restructured to offer more specific recommendations in addition to an expanded overview of mechanisms available for implementation.

The extent of intergovernmental cooperation is nowhere better illustrated than throughout the Community Facilities chapter. The graphics in the margin depict, at a glance, the multiple jurisdictions served by each of the facilities. The map on the following page identifies the surrounding jurisdictions in proximity to the City of Winchester.

A separate element is a databook about the City and the surrounding area. This book includes all pertinent demographic, economic, and development statistics as well as all general information about the history

and physical character of the City. Every effort shall be made to coordinate this publication with Frederick County and the City/County Economic Development Commission, as most of this information should be presented for the entire area so that a complete picture is available. The 3-ring binding and separate chapter pagination allows for ease of updating in the future.

